

Heirlooms

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Heirlooms

by [CalicoCat](#)

Summary

To grow old together. Not as sisters, perhaps, but as friends, if nothing more. That was something you'd wished, wasn't it?

The driveway was mostly clear. Snow – crisp, perfect white, and almost untouched – was piled up on both sides where a snowplow had passed. On the grey gravel itself there was now just an easy dusting, although they'd been forced to abandon the car halfway to the mansion; a jagged black branch had been brought down by the weight of snowfall and scythed across the driveway like a siege fortification.

Ryuko was grey now, but she'd put nut-brown through her hair that morning, making it the color it had been some thirty years or so earlier when she'd first become a mother. She glanced back to where a younger woman, almost mummified in a winter coat, was struggling after her.

Ryuko waited at the doorway until her daughter had caught up to her, then rapped twice with the large iron ring on the mansion's front door and spoke clearly into the air.

"House. Ryuko and Sukuyo Iijima to see Lady Satsuki."

There was a momentary pause, and then the sound of massive iron bolts disengaging.

"Voice-print identification confirmed. Welcome, Mrs. Iijima."

"C'mon, Sukuyo. She doesn't like to be kept waiting."

The heat in the high-ceilinged entrance hall was in stark contrast to the crisp air outside, and the two women quickly began to shed their thick outer layers. Ryuko helped Sukuyo with her coat, revealing a curving belly that hinted at a third visitor.

Ryuko carefully hung her daughter's coat on the worn oak stand, then almost doubled-up as fingers sharp as icicles jabbed her in the sides.

"Hiya, squirt."

Gasping for breath, Ryuko attempted to look behind her at the muscular old woman that had launched the surprise attack. She had outsized, owlsh glasses and an unruly mop of mousey-grey hair, entirely unremarkable for a woman her age, but in stark contrast there was a piratical sweep of red over her left eye. Ryuko managed to twist around in the surprisingly tight clutch and put her arms round the old woman.

"Hello, Auntie Ryuko." She gave an affectionate squeeze and was almost crushed in return. "Still creeping up on me."

"Still young enough to catch ya," Auntie Ryuko grinned, letting a wayward tooth catch her lower lip. "Hey-a, Sukuyo. You ready to pop yet?" She glanced at the younger woman, who bobbed an awkward bow in return. "Kiryuin! The tadpoles are here!"

"Please come through."

The words were surprisingly quiet, but still delivered with a precision and authority that almost compelled limbs to snap to attention. The three began to walk through to one of the

mansion's many reception rooms, and Auntie Ryuko slipped an arm around her namesake's waist, though an outside observer would have been hard-pressed to tell who was supporting whom.

"How's Shinji?"

"He's fine. Still working. Part-time, though. Any message for him?"

"Yeah. 'Get in the fucking robot, Shinji.'" Auntie Ryuko snorted with laughter.

Ryuko smiled.

"That never gets old."

He recertified each year, and kept his license up to date, but the truth was that her husband hadn't driven a robot – anything more sophisticated than the loader he used around their garden – for more than fifteen years. He was a manager now, and a manager of managers – more Ikari Senior than Junior, for what it was worth. Still, it amused Auntie Ryuko to pretend otherwise and Shinji was happy to accommodate her peculiarities. He was a good man, and a better father, and of everything that seemed the most important to Auntie Ryuko and Auntie Satsuki both. Ryuko hadn't the courage to ask why, even now.

"I still can't believe you married a Shinji that drives robots for a living. Sure that's that thing, what's the name... Oi, Kiryuin!" Auntie Ryuko shouted down the passageway. "What's the word for when your name ends up defining what ya do?"

"*Nominative determinism.*" Again, the quiet, composed voice. "Hence why a 'Ryuko' might be an unreliable sort of person. Present company excepted." That was directed at Ryuko Junior.

"Yeah. Exception that proves the rule, and all that stuff..."

"That's not exactly what the phrase means, Matoi."

Lady Satsuki – Auntie Satsuki – was seated on an antique couch in the parlor that looked out onto the Japanese garden. Imposing as ever, she'd chosen an angle that caused the light from the French windows to glance off the silver of her hair with blinding whiteness. It made her difficult to look at, but Ryuko could still see a simple white nightdress under a warm, toweling robe, and her hands resting atop the black wood of the walking stick she'd taken to using. She looked like she'd just emerged from bed, and that was worryingly unexpected.

"I would rise," Satsuki began, glancing pointedly at Auntie Ryuko, "but Matoi has forbidden me to exert myself, on pain of a severe beating. Really, the abuse of the elderly by the young is a terrible thing."

Ryuko leant down and kissed Satsuki on both cheeks.

"Hello, Auntie Satsuki."

The kisses seemed to bring warmth and animation to the aged features, and Satsuki smiled up at her.

“No Daisuke?”

Ryuko glanced at her daughter, and then gestured – with some impatient flicks of the hand – that Sukuyo should sit next to Auntie Satsuki.

“Daisuke’s... not on the scene any more. It turns out fatherhood wasn’t something he was looking for.”

Quick glances were exchanged between the older women, and Auntie Ryuko cracked ancient knuckles menacingly.

“Ya want me to look him up? Have a chat?”

Ryuko blanched slightly. Her mother had told her so many stories about Auntie Ryuko; many of them were utterly terrifying, if somewhat implausible. Fortunately, and somewhat unexpectedly, Satsuki defused the situation before any potentially murderous action was implicitly endorsed.

“May I?” she asked, and Sukuyo nodded mutely.

Satsuki placed her hand, long fingers splayed, on Sukuyo's belly.

"It will be a girl," she said firmly.

"Are you sure... We haven't even... Scan... It, she will?" Sukuyo stuttered.

"If she knows what's good for her, she will. Eyebrows here doesn't like to be corrected," smirked Auntie Ryuko.

"You can start thinking of names, then."

The expressions on Ryuko’s and Sukuyo’s faces suggested they were complicit in some unknown crime.

"It'll be 'Ryuko'."

Auntie Ryuko and Satsuki looked at each other suspiciously, and then back at the younger women.

"Yeah, it's not that I'm not flattered, but wouldn't 'Mako'..." Auntie Ryuko began.

"... be a more appropriate name. In terms of lineage," Satsuki concluded.

Ryuko had a habit, something unique to her that both Satsuki and Auntie Ryuko had noticed long ago. When she was thinking what to say – and most often when she was trying not to offend anyone – she’d look down and put her right hand to the back of her neck. She’d let her fingers roll in a quiet rhythm along her spine. Once. Twice. Ryuko played the triplet through

three times, which was as many as Auntie Ryuko and Satsuki had ever heard. Then she looked up.

“She’ll need to be independent, coming into the world without a father. So ‘Ryuko’ seems... a better choice. We’ll put ‘Mako’ aside for her sister.” She looked across at her daughter, who blushed. “Assuming Sukuyo eventually finds someone more reliable than Daisuke.”

“How’re you managing?”

The two Ryukos had left Satsuki and Sukuyo to stilted conversation in the parlor, and positioned themselves in a nearby corridor where they could watch for any social disasters.

Ryuko put her hand to the back of her neck again.

“I’m... Finding my way.”

“It gets easier,” Auntie Ryuko lied.

The conversation drifted to silence, the close hush caused by the layers of fresh snow outside, and both struggled in suffocating memories.

“Will you make it to the *Seishi* memorial?”

Auntie Ryuko looked back into the parlor, seeing Satsuki sitting in silence.

“I’ll try, but I can’t promise Satsuki will be there.”

“She looks so frail...”

It was not something Ryuko had ever expected to say. Even as a teenager Auntie Satsuki had been able to lift her effortlessly, whether onto her shoulders so she could pick peaches from the higher branches of the trees in the garden, or in a mercilessly effective throw in the estate’s *dojo*.

Auntie Ryuko almost put her head in her hands, as though she’d been beaten back in one too many arguments.

“After that last fall, I *told* her she should get a prosthetic, but she doesn’t want anythin’ to do with that transhumanist stuff. ‘I came into this world with this body, and that’s how I’ll leave it.’” She exhaled in an explosion of impatience. “She’s as stubborn as a mule, and half as charming.”

That was part of the story, and the other part was dark-ringed eyes and sleepless nights, and endless meetings with doctors and tables and charts, and flights in the corporate jet to a clinic just outside Seoul where she wouldn’t be recognized. And the whole was an oath of silence that Auntie Ryuko had taken, and the endless small deceptions and false explanations that entailed.

“You haven’t gone for any enhancements either, Auntie Ryuko.”

“Pot and kettle and black, coming from you.”

Ryuko laughed, embarrassed at the comparison.

“Well... I guess I got Mum’s constitution.”

Ryuko was 100% Mankanshoku, through and through. But somehow there was more than a little of Satsuki in her, and a great deal of her other aunt. Auntie Ryuko wondered, as she had done many times, whether something had passed back into Mako when she’d worn Senketsu. Something of Satsuki. Something of herself. A legacy that had been passed on to the children they’d both resolved never to have. In a world of incomprehensibility, the link between them all remained inexplicable. It was much more than just the name.

“Yeah, Mako – your mum – she was a tough one.”

Auntie Ryuko had lived long enough that there were a few beatings she could look back on with fond memories. There was the evening in Shinjuku that had started with ten-against-one in an alley beside a hostess club and ended with all-you-could-drink *sake* in an *izakaya* and assailants that had become friends for life. And earlier still there was the pounding she’d taken at the hands of someone who’d been her only friend, at the time. “Could’ve kicked Satsuki’s butt and mine in one go, if she’d wanted.” Only two people – two human beings, at any rate – had ever hit her so hard that she’d seen stars, literal color-burst, vision-swimming stars. Now only one of them remained. “Always thought she’d outlive all of us.”

“I think that after Dad... I think she thought he’d be lonely.” Ryuko tried a fragile smile. “And she knew we’d have you and Auntie Satsuki to look after us.”

In the entrance hall the tall clock began to strike the hour, and the two women waited until the chimes had died away.

“I’m sorry,” Ryuko continued, “it’s taken forever to go through their things. Dad was organized – disciplined, I guess – but Mum... I found some of her old notebooks from when she was a student.” She fished in her shoulder bag and pulled out a bundle of Campus notes. “She’d have wanted you to have them.”

Auntie Ryuko leafed through one. There was bad math, so obviously incorrect that even she didn’t need the Life Fibers to spot the mistakes, and clumsy English. Some blank pages, and lots of doodles of rabbits. The dates became familiar, and she turned the page.

I made a new friend today. She’s called Ryuko. She’s super-tough!

Auntie Ryuko smiled a clandestine smile of recollection, thinking of a coconut bob flying towards her at speed. She flicked a few pages further and stopped, feeling her chest tighten. There was a rough drawing of a heart, framing a single word.

Ryuko.

She felt her eyes sting, and she struggled to take a breath.

Dammit, kid. Don't open that old wound. Even the Life Fibers can't close it.

Auntie Ryuko took off her glasses and rubbed one eye roughly with the heel of her palm.

“Auntie Ryuko.” Ryuko reached out and placed a hand on her arm. “I know you and Mum were really close. To be honest, sometimes I’m surprised that she and Dad ended up together.”

Auntie Ryuko slipped her glasses back on and barely managed one of her trademark lopsided grins.

“Would you believe we tossed a coin and I lost? Besides,” she tried to look magnanimous, “family needs a stable source of income, not a delinquent drifter.”

“But you never drifted too far from here, did you, Auntie Ryuko?”

The question hung in the air between them, unanswered. There was a gentle tinkle of Satsuki ringing a bell, and one of the mansion’s few remaining maids passed by, bearing a tray of tea and delicate pastries.

“Anyway, I thought maybe that Mum...” Ryuko tailed off a little, and then continued, “because you and Auntie Satsuki were...”

“No,” said Auntie Ryuko. “No, we never...”

“It’s just that the two of you... Sometimes you seem more than friends. Even when you’re arguing.” Ryuko remembered shouting at her brother over the dinner table, and her mother silencing them both with home-cooked bundles of unidentifiable things. “More like... siblings.”

Auntie Ryuko found something suddenly fascinating about the wood paneling of the walls, and the intricate plaster cornices on the ceiling.

“I hear you call her *nee-san* sometimes. When you aren’t calling her ‘Caterpillar-eyebrowed bitch’.”

The older woman opened her mouth as though she were just about to say something, then looked back towards the parlor. There was the slightest pause, and then Auntie Ryuko seemed – if not quite to relax – to be resigned to some unknown truth.

“Heh. Well, yeah. She was my *senpai* at school. But I can’t stick calling her that. So *nee-san* is an ‘acceptable compromise’.”

“She had a little sister, didn’t she, Auntie Satsuki?”

“Yeah. But she died real young. She didn’t even get named.”

“That’s so sad.” There had been some touch-and-go moments when her brother was born. Ryuko had been too young to understand at the time, but she’d seen how her parents had

talked about in later years. And she'd understood it fully when she'd become a mother herself.

"Anyway, at least she had you." Ryuko took her aunt's hand. "It's sweet: you and Auntie Satsuki living together so many years. It's like something in a Victorian novel." She tried to suppress a grin. "Auntie Satsuki as Miss Havisham."

"And I'm Mr. Darcy," Auntie Ryuko roared.

"Dummy. Darcy is from Jane Austen, not Charles Dickens."

Auntie Ryuko looked genuinely surprised.

"Really? Huh, well I skipped a load of English Literature classes. Was probably out kickin' Lady High-and-Mighty's butt."

"Dementia is clearly affecting your memory, Matoï," came the penetrating voice from the nearby room.

Auntie Ryuko shrugged.

"Her hearing's as good as ever. Unfortunately."

Ryuko watched Auntie Satsuki for a moment – she seemed to be explaining something to Sukuyo – and then turned back to Auntie Ryuko.

"Did you two fight a lot, when you were at school?"

"Yeah. Fought so hard we could've split the world in two."

"And now you've been friends so long."

Auntie Ryuko pulled a face.

"I *seem to recall* a certain Ryuko Gamagoori bitching to me about a certain Shinji Iijima all the time when she was at university."

"Yes. And look at us now. Decades married. Grandchildren on the way."

"'Rivals to friends.' It's the best, what's the word? Meme? Trope?"

Ryuko looked through into the parlor, where Sukuyo was finally relaxing a little and chatting with Satsuki. She smiled, fondly.

"It's the *second-best* trope."

The Iijima's had left for their house in Kanagawa. Auntie Ryuko – now just Ryuko again – had walked with them to their car and waved as Sukuyo had looked through the rear window as it headed out towards the highway. She remembered another car taking that same route – an old, restored Cadillac – and Mako's face pressed to the glass, a few months before her first daughter was born. Ryuko waited until the *shush* of the car on the light snow turned to the rumble of tires on tarmac, and she heard the electric motors spin up to full power. Then she picked up the fallen branch that had blocked the drive with one hand and hurled it easily far into the woods that surrounded the mansion. The snowplow would be able to make it all the way to the front doors tomorrow.

She was halfway back to the mansion when she heard the crack of wood against wood and then metal, the sound of a walking stick tumbling down the stairs, bouncing and rolling end over end.

“Dammit, Satsuki!”

Ryuko cleared the remaining few hundred yards in a single leap, ignoring the risk that any of the staff might see her. None of the windows were open and – though she had contemplated crashing through the wall – she let precious fractions of a second slip by as she fumbled for her key. Finally through the front door, she saw the cane strike the marble floor once, bounce back, and then roll to a stop. Perhaps three quarters of the way up the broad staircase, Satsuki was clutching onto the bannister with both hands, part embracing it as though the stairs were about to collapse. Ryuko vaulted up to her in two strides, arms scooping under her and taking her weight.

“What part of ‘taking it easy’ don’t you understand, you idiot!?”

The anger was half feigned, hiding her dread at the breaths that she strained to hear, and the irregularly beating heart. Satsuki clawed wildly at the air for a moment, then allowed herself to be half-carried to her room and lain on her bed.

“She is coming.” The rise and fall of her chest became more regular, but each breath was still too shallow – little more than a sip of air. “I can feel Mother’s fingers around my heart.”

Ryuko brushed the silver hair away from her sister’s face and tried to arrange her robe to keep her warm.

“Bullcrap. That old witch is never comin’ back. You just pushed yourself too hard. Nothin’ more.”

“There’s no need for you to pretend any longer, Ryuko,” whispered Satsuki.

“I don’t know what ya mean.” Ryuko glanced away. “Doctors said a bit more rest and you’d...”

“We both know that bed-rest isn’t going to stay the blade that’s been swung against me.” She gave Ryuko a look that bridged decades. “After all, it was I that set it in motion.”

She'd poisoned herself. Not intentionally – hemlock might have befitted Socrates but was beneath the lofty Satsuki Kiryuin – but lack of intent would do little to commute the sentence she was under. The drugs and chemicals she'd used to tame Junketsu, to prevent its Life Fibers from spiraling out of control when she wore it, had leached back into her body. They'd made a slow, slow journey over the intervening years, finally settling in her brain and nervous system. And there they diligently carried out the function she'd designed into them: preventing cellular replication and regeneration.

If you'd known this would happen, would you still have done it? That was the question there was no point in Ryuko asking, because she knew what the answer would be. But there was another question. *If you'd known you would be leaving me behind, alone, would you still have done it?* That was the question that she couldn't bear to ask. There was madness in both answers.

“But that's not what I meant.” Satsuki repeated herself, and blue eyes, clear and still piercing, fixed Ryuko. “I meant that *you* don't have to pretend any longer. About anything.”

A thousand lies and evasions wheeled through Ryuko's mind, and each died in her throat as she looked back at her sister.

“Please. Let me see her again.”

Ryuko sighed heavily, and relaxed, and the years rolled off her. Her skin tightened, the geography of wrinkles worn away by time-in-reverse, and blue-black flooded into her hair from the roots. The red fringe glowed brightly. Satsuki's eyes were moist, and she raised a faltering hand to her sister's cheek.

“There she is. There's the little sister I remember.”

Ryuko squeezed Satsuki's fingers gently, a young hand enveloping the old, and then took off her glasses.

“Can't see with these damn things on now,” she mumbled. She pouted a little, but there wasn't much energy behind it.

“So, smart-arse. When did you realize?”

“Sometimes, first thing in the morning, your wrinkles wouldn't be in quite the right place. It took me many years. But to look upon that face so often, so many times that it became more familiar than my own...”

“Guess I always was lousy with details. Teachers ragged on at me about it.”

“Ryuko, lift me up. Let me look at you properly.”

Ryuko slipped her arms under Satsuki's back, and pulled her gently into a sitting position.

She's almost weightless. It's like she's evaporating.

Satsuki looked at her peacefully, and then looked down as though embarrassed, or ashamed.

“Sis... What's...” Ryuko began.

The voice was very quiet now.

“I know it was selfish of me, but I always wanted my little sister.”

Ryuko shook her head.

“You didn’t even get that. Not as far as the outside world knew.”

“But I knew. You gave me that, while you were here. With me.” She paused. “Even though I knew it wasn’t what you were looking for.”

Satsuki raised her head. "But you can kiss me now. Kiss me in the way you've always wanted to."

“Satsuki, I...” Ryuko looked away, but Satsuki gripped the collar of her shirt with unexpected strength.

“Kiss the Satsuki Kiryuin that you remember. The girl from the first time we met.”

Her lips were dry, like the pages of the books she loved so much, but Ryuko pressed against them passionately, trying to force life back into her. And when the final breath came, after which there was only stillness, Ryuko felt it across moist lips like the murmurs of wind in early autumn. Satsuki’s eyes were already closed, but Ryuko placed a hand across them all the same, and then across her own, biting her bottom lip to stifle the tears. She laid her sister down carefully on the bed, afraid she would shatter like porcelain.

“House. Call Ryuko Iijima.”

The call went to voicemail, and Ryuko breathed a ragged sigh of relief. The message was simple, but she didn’t want to have to explain it.

“Satsuki’s will is in the drawer in the dresser in the hallway. The lawyers’ll know what to do with it.”

There’d only be one will. She’d been telling Satsuki for years that she’d been putting some money aside for this day, so there was no need for her to leave anything to ‘Ryuko Matoi’. She was pretty certain her sister had known that was a lie. She had nothing, because everything she had ever needed was in this house, and there was nothing she needed to leave behind, but...

You. I need you to do something for me.

Don’t play dumb. I know you can hear me.

Yes, Lady Ryuko.

The voice was subservient but... ambiguous. Like an obsequious servant, or one of the stewards Ragyo had had. The steward of the Kiryuin family. Yes, that was it.

I need you to get out of me.

You are aware that the likelihood of your survival without us is vanishingly small at this point.

Yeah. I know that.

We cannot agree. Your father impressed on us the importance of ensuring your survival.

I'll rip you out myself, if I have to.

That would be... exceedingly painful.

Like having my heart torn out? I've done that before. Twice, if you count this evening.

Ryuko paused. If she'd been speaking aloud her voice would have been cracking at this point, but as it was, her mind was just going to pieces.

I need to go with her. She'll just get lost without me. She'll stop to help some poor wandering soul, and she'll never make it to the afterlife.

She waited for the response. The sound of her breath was like the wind buffeting the windows of the mansion during a typhoon. One hand slipped up inside her shirt and she let a nail trace down her sternum to where she thought her heart would be. She pressed a little, trying to gauge how much force she would need. But then the inner voice was quiet, and somehow familiar.

The part of us that is still 'Senketsu' says he understands. That it is time for you to cast off your old clothes, and put on something new and different, even if it is difficult.

We will do as you wish.

Then listen up...

The mistress of the Kiryuin estate was found by the staff the next day, hours before Ryuko Iijima heard the message that had been left for her. The will was where it was expected to be. The estate, that part of it that was not already in the ownership of the conglomerate, was to be divided between the living descendants of Lady Satsuki's childhood friends. The mansion and its grounds (and there was some surprise in the society columns about this) went to Ryuko Iijima, née Gamagoori, the granddaughter of a quack physician and an unlicensed nurse.

And as to the mistress' longtime companion... Even as an old woman, some had found her aggressive and uncultured, a strange foil to the last surviving descendant of the noble house of Kiryuin. There were rumors of fraud and theft, but the house was found locked, and all its contents and treasures accounted for. There was one set of footfalls in the snowy fields, leading towards the forests, but they disappeared among the rocks. It was concluded that Lady Satsuki's companion had wandered out into the snow in her grief and perished. But the

forests were deep, the hills rocky and with countless crevasses, and they never found the body.

Things had gone to hell remarkably quickly.

One close-run election, a lurch towards strident militarism, then a subsequent landslide victory and suddenly war – internal, external – seemed a threatening possibility. There were daily proclamations about disputed islands. Foreign troops on native soil. Old alliances were torn up, and new ones formed in their place. And in the country itself, and particularly on the young, a heavy, heavy hand began to press down.

The girl was out of breath and paused in the dark passageway. Third strike: caught by the Disciplinary Committee giving food to the motley residents of a little shanty town in the underpass near the school, and now she was a fugitive.

She'd heard stories from her grandmother about an old academy in the bay – long gone now – where tardiness was punishable by death. Her great-grandmother had been a student there apparently, which seemed wholly unlikely considering the cheerful, chaotic energy of the girl she'd seen in the pictures. For the years of her childhood she'd assumed that these stories were just cautionary tales, like finishing your rice at meals and respecting your ancestors. Now she was less certain.

Third strike. That was immediate conviction and transport to the north, to do... What? She didn't know. Prison. Work camps. Whispered rumors. There were empty desks in class, and empty houses on the roads to school, and students – at seventeen or eighteen, only a year older than she was – with armbands and batons patrolling the streets. Suddenly, the school in the stories sounded more like a prediction than a legend.

Her knuckles ached, but she'd managed to land a good right hook on the Committee's president, sending her sprawling and scattering her group like bowling pins. And then she'd run, skipping between subways and overground rail, heading back to the lodge that was home, for the rucksack she'd kept ready, and then out into the grounds and forests that surrounded the sprawling corporate museum.

There was a false wall at the back of the little hillside shrine, deep-shadowed by tall trees that predated the Shogunate. Her grandmother had told her about it, and about the narrow passage and steep steps down, and the metal door that sealed the vault beyond.

"If you ever need to hide," she'd said, "this will open the door." Old fingers had pressed the pendant into a young hand: she'd probably only been six at the time. It was a fragment of metal or ceramic: black, and very sharp. It might once have come from the blade of a sword.

Pssst.

The girl started, looking back where she'd come for her pursuers, even though she remembered the massive door sealing silently and perfectly behind her.

Tcch. Over here.

She swung her torch around wildly, trying to pinpoint the source of the sound.

Hey, kid. What's your name?

There was a brief specular flash, and the beam picked out a long box: a battered flight case, like you'd use to carry a guitar. There was something above it, and the girl allowed her torch to sweep upwards. It was a school uniform, a *sailor fuku* in a style that had been school-day standard almost a century earlier: black, and trimmed with crimson and gold.

“Ryuko...”

A chuckle echoed in her mind, or in the dark spaces around her.

Now there's a coincidence...

*I have the delusion
that you are with me
as I walk through the fields
of flowers, under the moon.*

- Yosano Akiko

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